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ward in civilization—a real leader among nations, not in war and conquest but in social reform.” In one letter he criticizes Professor Lowell’s views on the habitability of Mars; in another he argues strongly for an eight-hour day. All this from a man who was so whole-souled a naturalist that “in describing his first sight of the *Ornithoptera cræsus*, he says that the blood rushed to his head and he felt much more like fainting than he had done when in apprehension of immediate death!”

The narrative parts of Mr. Marchant’s book, though adequately informing, are somewhat labored and over-cautious in style. In particular is the author’s rather half-hearted attempt to compare the lives and minds of Wallace and Darwin unsatisfactorily weak and tentative. The book as a whole brings a welcome addition to our knowledge of a really great man.

FRENCH POLICY AND THE AMERICAN ALLIANCE OF 1778. By Edward S. Corwin. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1916.

No sort of history is more difficult of satisfactory analysis than that of international relations, for the historian is in this case obliged not only to determine matters of fact and to trace causes, but also to ascertain motives; and the motives of a foreign policy are notoriously hard to penetrate. To begin with, it is sometimes by no means easy for the student to understand exactly what is meant by the motives of a nation in its foreign relations. Vagueness on this point, or uncertainty of emphasis on the part of the historian, leads to discouraging vagueness of conception in the mind of the reader. If it is clearly understood that by the policy of a nation is meant the controlling ideas of those who guided its destinies in a given period—the ideas that were actually effective—the matter is simplified; but then it becomes a task of peculiar delicacy to reduce to their basic elements the conflicts of contemporary opinions, theories, and interests; to distinguish between ostensible and real motives, and finally to avoid being unduly influenced by the natural assumption that what would seem to modern minds the obvious motives were really those which had weight with the statesmen of a past age.

No sort of history, however, is more fascinating, or potentially more enlightening, than this of international relations; for it is precisely through the shifts and pretenses, the often mistaken aims, and the inadequate principles of diplomatic action that the outlines of world-history may be made out.

The notable success of Professor Corwin in overcoming the difficulties just referred to and in eliciting the full interest and value of his subject, in his recently published study of the Franco-American alliance of 1778, is due to his thorough mastery of the

principles that governed French political thinking in the period he traverses. Once the leading ideas of the time are grasped, it is remarkable how perfectly all the main facts fall into line, and how susceptible of easy and natural explanation all minor difficulties become.

Public opinion—the ideals of the people of each nation—is destined, one may hope, to become a more potent factor in international affairs than it has been in the past, and even in the eighteenth century it may be admitted that French popular sentiment—itsself influenced by the philosophy of the time—exerted upon French official action an influence that was favorable to America. “Nevertheless,” writes Professor Corwin, “the idea that France ought to intervene, if chance offered, between England and her North American colonies in behalf of the latter, came in the first instance, not from the *salon*, but from the Foreign Office.” Again, the notion that France was actuated merely by traditional hostility toward England and by jealousy of her growing power, will hardly suffice except for those who are content with half an answer. For the reader of Professor Corwin’s treatise, the flat and superficial view embodied in this statement is replaced by a far more satisfactory tri-dimensional knowledge.

In order to comprehend French policy in the eighteenth century, one has to grasp fully the prevailing doctrines of Mercantilism and of the Balance of Power, and one has further to understand thoroughly the meaning of the fact that during the period in question Europe was still organized on the dynastic principle, with its corollary—“especially noteworthy in the case of the elder branch of the House of Bourbon—that position and influence were the essential objectives of diplomacy even in the age of ‘Benevolent Monarchy.’” In reading the documentary extracts which Professor Corwin has embodied in his narrative one is more and more struck with the preponderating influence of these three groups of ideas. The premises of Choiseul and Vergennes are practically identical, and the same kind of thinking underlies the narrow, self-seeking policy of Spain as that which governed the larger and in some respects more generous views of France. Accordingly, one soon becomes satisfied that Professor Corwin has dug down to the root of his subject and that his treatise is no less sound as an ultimate view than it is thorough and intelligible as a formulation of the facts.

In brief it was the aim of French diplomacy during the period of the American Revolution, as it had been before, to restore to France that influence and prestige in Europe which she had enjoyed in the palmy days of Louis XIV. In order to accomplish this end, it was held that the Balance of Power must be kept favorable to France, while Mercantilism taught that power depended upon a

favorable balance of trade. The policy, therefore, which the French Foreign Office on the whole consistently followed was to weaken the power of England by helping to deprive her of her American colonies, the source, as was universally believed, of her commercial greatness.

In this larger view of French motives—a view the correctness of which is confirmed by the facts at every turn—the notion that France was simply concerned for the safety of her Caribbean possessions, in view of a possible attack by combined English and American forces (supposing the rebellious colonies to be satisfied by British concessions), fades into relative unimportance. The arguments of Vergennes on this point appear to be not altogether consistent with one another, nor with opinions expressed by the same statesman in other connections; and it is pretty plain that Vergennes used the defense argument largely for its value as propaganda—for countering such objections, for example, as those of Turgot, and for overcoming the timidity and the scruples of Louis XVI. Thus French intervention in America is seen to be not “an episode in the British-French struggle for colonial dominion in the Western Hemisphere,” but “an episode in the European policy of the *Ancien Régime*.”

Closely related in conception to the foreign policy of France, though in a measure offsetting it, was the attitude of Spain toward Great Britain and toward the British colonies which had revolted. For though Florida Blanca, the Spanish Secretary for Foreign Affairs, seems to have agreed with Vergennes as to the desirability of weakening England and as to the efficacy of the means proposed, his fear lest the growth of a strong American state should endanger Spain's possessions in America, as well as his aversion to encouraging revolution, kept him from co-operating heartily with the French programme.

The story of the Spanish complication sheds interesting light upon the fact that the victory at Yorktown was not directly the result of plans formed by the French Foreign Office, but of the independent action of Rochambeau and Grasse; and it helps also to explain how the American peace commissioners came to violate their instructions. Informing, too, is the author's estimate of the real worth of the aid eventually given by Spain, as well as his acute analysis of the effect upon American interests of the secret agreement between Spain and France.

So clearly cut are the logical lines of Professor Corwin's treatise that a single reading proves more instructive than the laborious study of an equally scholarly but less lucidly reasoned work could be. In an unusual degree the author possesses the skill to probe deeply into the details of a subject without diverting attention from the main issues. His work as a whole is shapely and possesses great continuity of interest.